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A FRENCH PROVINCIAL REPERTORY IN 1662

Towards 1662 provincial France, where Hardy and Molière had tried out their early productions before risking them on the more exacting audiences of Paris, was becoming known rather as a field for plays that had enjoyed a run at the capital, but were no longer in favor there. A list of such plays is furnished us by Poisson's *Baron de la Crasse*,¹ in which a travelling troupe offers to act before the noble protagonist, who is as rustic as his title indicates, any of the following pieces:

Eudoxe, et l'Hospital des Fous, Messieurs, le Dom Quichot, l'Illusion Comique, Argenis, Ibrahim et l'Amour tyrannique, La Belle Esclave, Orphée, Esther, Alcimédon, Gustaphe, Sanche-Panse, Erigone, Didon, Alcionée, Osman, les Captifs, Zénobie, Le Prince déguisé, Clorise, la Silvie, Sophonisbe, Andromire, Agis, Coriolan, Cléopâtre, Quicquaire, Eurimédon, Sejan, L'Inconstance d'Hylas, Clarimonde, Penthée, Téléphonte, Arbiran, Laure persécutée, L'Aveugle clairvoyant, Mirame, Darius, Le Prince fugitif, Rowane, Arminius, Roland le Furieux, Palène, Mithridate, Dom Sanche d'Aragon, Mélite, Tyridate.

This passage indicates that all of these plays had been represented at Paris, for Poisson, who was an actor as well as a dramatist, would not have selected for a list of this sort closet dramas, unknown to his audience, when plenty of acting plays were at hand. He thus supplements the work of Renaudot, Loret, and others of his contemporaries, without whose testimony we could not be sure that these plays were actually produced. In the next place, we learn that these plays must, in 1662, have seemed antiquated to the theater-goers of Paris, for no place would be less appropriate to plays that were up to date than the château of the Baron. Moreover, the actor who recites the list care-

fully avoids naming plays that are known to have been popular at the time, such as *Nicomède, le menteur, Dom Japhet, les Précieuses*. It is true that he mentions the *Cid*, but not with the other plays and only when the Baron asks him if he has it. It is introduced to show the Baron's ignorance, for it is almost the only play he remembers and he has difficulty in recalling its name.

Again, while Poisson probably did not verify his implication that each of these plays was represented in the provinces, his evidence doubtless holds for most of them. It is confirmed by Corneille himself as far as *Dom Sanche* is concerned, for in the *Examen* (1660) to this piece he declares that "au bout de quelque temps elle se trouva reléguée dans les provinces, où elle conserve encore son premier lustre." The fact that this play, as well as *Mélite* and *l'Illusion*, were afterwards reproduced at Paris must have been largely due to Corneille's reputation. The *Registre* of La Grange informs us that *Alcionée* was played at Paris, December 2, 1659, and that *Sanche Panse* was given some fifteen times in the years 1659-1662, but most of the plays mentioned were probably never restored to the Parisian stage.

The list indicates, then, that in 1662 the provincial taste was lagging about twenty years behind that of Paris, that it was still partial to startling events and noble tirades while Paris was preparing for a realistic treatment of passions and manners. Though following Paris in discarding the pastoral, the provinces still adhered to the tragi-comedy and heroic tragedy at the expense of comedy, largely absent or reduced to the farce. The favorite authors, too, are those who rose to fame at Paris in the thirties and forties. The list includes all the more important of these except Scarron and Thomas Corneille, both of whom began to write only towards the end of this period.

The following list gives the authorship of the plays and the dates of their first publication. The first representations, the exact dates of which are largely unknown, usually took place from six months to three years before the plays were printed.

¹ Paris, 1662, scene 5. The comedy was reprinted in 1863 by Victor Fournel, *Contemporains de Molière*, I, 413-428. A reference in Loret's *Muze historique* shows that it was first played about July 15, 1662.

D'AUBIGNAC, *Zénobie*¹ (1647); BARO, *Clo-
rise* (1632), *Clarimonde* (1643), *Le Prince
fugitif* (1649); BENSERADE, *Cléopâtre* (1636),
Gustaphe (1637); BEYS, *L'Hospital des fous*
(1636); BOISROBERT, *Palène* (1640), *Le Cou-
ronnement de Darié*² (1648); BOUSCAL, *Dom
Quichotte de la Manche*³ (1640), *Le Gouverne-
ment de Sancho Pansa* (1642), *Agis* (1642);
BOYER, *Tyridate* (1649); DE BROUSSE, *L'Aveugle
Clairvoyant* (1650); CHAPOTON, *La Descente
d'Orphée aux enfers* (1640); CHEVREAU, *Cori-
olan*⁴ (1638); CORNEILLE, *Mélite*⁵ (1633),
*L'Illusion comique*⁶ (1639), *Dom Sanche
d'Arragon* (1650); LA CALPRENÈDE, *La Mort
de Mithridate* (1637); DESFONTAINES, *Eurimé-
don* (1637); DESMARETS, *Roxane* (1640), *Mi-
rame* (1641), *Erigone* (1642); DU RYER, *Ar-
génis* (1631), *Alcimédon* (1634), *Alcionée*⁷
(1640), *Esther* (1644); L'ESTOILE, *La Belle
Esclave* (1645); GILBERT, *Téléphonte* (1643);
GILLET DE LA TESSONNERIE, *Quixaire* (1640);
MAGNON, *Séjan* (1647); MAIRET, *Sylvie*
(1628), *Sophonisbe* (1635), *Roland le furieux*
(1640); MARÉCHAL, *L'Inconstance d'Hylas*⁸
(1635); D'OUVILLE, *Les Trahisons d'Arbiran*
(1638); ROTROU, *Laure persécutée* (1639), *Les
Captifs* (1640); GEORGES DE SCUDÉRY, *Le
Prince déguisé* (1635), *Didon* (1637), *L'Amour
tyrannique* (1639), *Eudoxe* (1641), *Andro-*

mire (1641), *Arminius* (1643), *Ibrahim*
(1643); TRISTAN L'HERMITE, *Panthée*⁹
(1639), *Osman*¹⁰ (1656).

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THE ORDER OF WORDS IN CERTAIN RHYTHM-GROUPS

In the first edition (1905) of Jespersen's
*Growth and Structure of the English Lan-
guage*, pp. 233-4, occurs the following passage:

"In combinations of a monosyllable and a
disyllable by means of *and*, the practice is al-
ways to place the short word first, because the
rhythm then becomes the regular 'aa 'aa in-
stead of 'aaa 'a (' before the *a* denotes the
strongly stressed syllable). Thus we say
'bread and butter,' not 'butter and bread';
further: bread and water, milk and water, cup
and saucer, wind and weather, head and shoul-
ders, by fits and snatches, from top to bottom,
rough and ready, rough and tumble, free and
easy, dark and dreary, high and mighty, up and
doing." And in a foot-note the author adds:
"compare also such titles of books as Songs
and Poems, Men and Women, Past and Pres-
ent, French and English, Night and Morning."

This sweeping conclusion is, in the second
edition (1912), considerably modified, the word
"always" being dropped from the first sen-
tence and the clause made to read, "The usual
practice is to place the short word first, etc."
Even in this modified form, however, the state-
ment does not, I think, give a true impression
of English usage. It implies, if it does not
say outright, that rhythm-groups of the type
"butter and bread" occur in English but
rarely. It also suggests that such phrases lack
idiomatic force. I submit that just the con-
trary is true; phrases of this type occur fre-
quently, and they are strongly idiomatic. Fur-
thermore they seem to have a useful stylistic
function.

⁹This play seems meant rather than the *Panthée*
(1639) of the obscure dramatist, Durval.

¹⁰First played in 1647.

¹ Acted as early as 1640, for Chapelain, in a letter
dated April 6 of that year, speaks of going to see it.
A play of the same name by Pousset was published
in 1653, one by Magron in 1660, but the obscurity
of the first of these dramatists and the late date of
both plays make it improbable that Poisson is here
referring to either of them.

² The reference is to this play rather than to the
Darius of Thomas Corneille (1660), which is too
late, or to Hardy's *Mort de Daire*, which is too early.

³ Mlle Béjart's *Dom Guichot* (1660) is too late to
be meant.

⁴ The reference may be to Chapoton's *Véritable
Coriolan* (1638).

⁵ First played about 1629.

⁶ First played about 1636.

⁷ First played about 1637.

⁸ First played about 1630.